

**Amendments to the Claims**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims**

1. (currently amended) A catheter assembly, comprising:
  - a [[first]] tube having a proximal end, a distal end, and a [[first]] lumen extending therethrough, wherein the lumen is in fluid communication with an expandable member proximate the distal end of the [[first]] tube;
  - a [[first]] port on the proximal end of the [[first]] tube in fluid communication with the [[first]] lumen; and
  - a seal releasably attached to the [[first]] port so as to substantially prevent the passage of air into the [[first]] lumen, wherein the [[first]] lumen has a pressure less than atmospheric pressure.
2. (original) The catheter assembly in accordance with claim 1, wherein the expandable member is a balloon.
3. (original) The catheter assembly in accordance with claim 1, wherein the seal comprises a polymer.
4. (original) The catheter assembly in accordance with claim 1, wherein the seal comprises rubber.
5. (original) The catheter assembly in accordance with claim 4, wherein the seal comprises a self-sealing rubber septum.
6. (original) The catheter assembly in accordance with claim 1, wherein the seal comprises plastic.

7. (currently amended) The catheter assembly in accordance with claim 1, wherein the [[first]] tube includes a chemical coating capable of binding a quantity of CO<sub>2</sub>, N<sub>2</sub>, and O<sub>2</sub>.

8. (currently amended) The catheter assembly in accordance with claim 1, wherein prior to use the [[first]] lumen is filled with a fluid.

9. (currently amended) A balloon catheter with a proximal end and a distal end, comprising:

a [[first]] tube having a proximal end, a distal end, and a [[first]] lumen extending therethrough, wherein the [[first]] tube includes a [[first]] port on a proximal end thereof in fluid communication with the [[first]] lumen;

a balloon disposed at the distal end of the catheter and in fluid communication with the [[first]] lumen; and

a seal releasably attached to the [[first]] port so as to substantially prevent the passage of air into the [[first]] lumen wherein the [[first]] lumen is substantially free of air therein.

10. (original) The catheter in accordance with claim 9, wherein the seal comprises a polymer.

11. (original) The catheter in accordance with claim 9, wherein the seal comprises rubber.

12. (original) The catheter in accordance with claim 9, wherein the seal comprises a self-sealing rubber septum.

13. (original) The catheter in accordance with claim 9, wherein the seal comprises plastic.

14. (currently amended) The catheter in accordance with claim 9, wherein the [[first]] tube includes a chemical coating capable of binding a quantity of CO<sub>2</sub>, N<sub>2</sub>, and O<sub>2</sub>.

15. (currently amended) The catheter in accordance with claim 9, wherein prior to use the [[first]] lumen is filled with a fluid.

16. (currently amended) A method of preparing a balloon catheter, comprising the steps of:

providing a balloon catheter including a [[first]] tube having a proximal end, a distal end, and a [[first]] lumen extending therethrough, wherein the [[first]] tube has a [[first]] port in fluid communication with the [[first]] lumen, and a seal releasably attached to the [[first]] port so as to substantially prevent the passage of air into the [[first]] lumen with a balloon disposed proximate the distal end of the catheter in fluid communication with the [[first]] lumen;

providing a sealing device that is detachably connectable to the [[first]] port, wherein the sealing device includes a seal detachably secured therein;

connecting the sealing device to the [[first]] port;

using the sealing device to pull vacuum until the air pressure within the [[first]] lumen is substantially less than atmospheric pressure followed by placing the seal over the [[first]] port; and

disconnecting the sealing device from the [[first]] port.

17. (original) The method in accordance with claim 16, wherein the seal comprises a polymer.

18. (original) The method in accordance with claim 16, wherein the seal comprises rubber.

19. (original) The method in accordance with claim 16, wherein the seal comprises a self-sealing rubber septum.

20. (original) The method in accordance with claim 16, wherein the seal comprises plastic.

21. (currently amended) The method in accordance with claim 16, wherein the  
[[first]] tube includes a chemical coating capable of binding a quantity of CO<sub>2</sub>, N<sub>2</sub>, and O<sub>2</sub>.